Marcuse

Defended against his devotees

Stefan Hain

On January 27, 2024, Platypus Affiliated Society member Stefan Hain gave this teach-in as part of Platypus's sixth annual European Conference at the Humboldt University of Berlin. An edited transcript follows.[1]

I WANT TO BEGIN WITH a quote that struck me when I read it:

> We live in a stressful world that is dominated by money and lack of time. [M]an is much too caught up in his everyday life and rarely develops multidimensional. His dimension mostly consists of his job, his family and sometimes of his hobbies and what he calls his religious belief. So where does his development start and where does it end? What kind of knowledge does this man acquire? How much does he want to acquire at all?

The quote is not, as one might expect, taken from Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), but from an interview with a Black Metal band I knew in the days of my youth. The quote becomes more, not less interesting given the fact that this musician would probably not identify himself as a Marxist, and probably not even as a Leftist.

Marcuse had a way of addressing phenomena which still echo in today's culture and everyday life. Marcuse consciously attempted to express himself less esoterically than his colleague and fellow thinker Theodor Adorno, in a way which seems strangely mirrored in a third, former colleague, Erich Fromm. But more on that later.

Marcuse's more exoteric approach to critical theory brings forth its own problems. More than his enemies, Marcuse's devotees have been the main reason for why Marcuse keeps being misunderstood, where he is not simply forgotten. But it would be too easy to say that the obscuration of the Marxism of Herbert Marcuse is due to his self-acclaimed followers. Under ongoing capitalism the dead Left has maneuvered itself into a situation where love and hate embrace intimately. Like the ouroboros, the ancient symbol of a snake eating its own tail, misrepresentations of devotees — lovers — and critics — haters — inform and mirror each other. False claims will be taken up, repeated and sold as the essence of Marcuse. Therefore to defend Marcuse against his devotees, we will also have to take a look at his critics.

I want to give a brief account of Marcuse as a political person and Marxist thinker. I aim to present Marcuse as a critic of the revolution betrayed, a product of the crisis of Marxism in the 20th century. My claim being, of course, that Marcuse's intervention in the New Left and post-WWII society, cannot be understood without his earlier work — a point that Marcuse himself explicated several times, and which devotees and enemies seem to ignore quite actively.

To introduce Marcuse, I chose two events, which would influence and inform his thinking and political perspective for the rest of his life. Both were understood by Marcuse as betrayals of radical critique in the forms of praxis and theory. The betrayal of radicalism and its immanent critique would be the red thread running through Marcuse's work, namely his Marxism.

He became a member of the SPD[2] in 1917, participated in the failed German Revolution of 1918–19 as a member of a soldiers' council, and left the SPD in 1919, after it became clear that the Party was responsible for the assassination of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. This betrayal of the Revolution by the leadership of the working-class organizations would go on to inform Marcuse's work until the end of his life.

Marcuse spent the 1920s working: reading and thinking. By the late 1920s he had begun to work toward a habilitation under Martin Heidegger, the text of which became *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity* (1932). This habilitation never came to be. Marcuse distanced himself from Heidegger, after Heidegger openly supported National Socialism on the rise. As Marcuse would put it later, "I did not see the fascism in Heidegger's thought before, but after he had made his position clear, it became clear that this was also part of his philosophy." Therefore, whatever Jürgen Habermas might have thought while saying this, it is not helpful to describe Marcuse as "the first Heidegger-Marxist,"[3] however much Marcuse's earlier work might have pioneered ideas that later on would take form in the ugly oxymoron "Heideggerian Marxism."

With the 1932 publication of the first *Complete Works of Marx and Engels* (*MEGA*),[4] Marcuse read Marx's 1844 *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*. He got *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity* published, and commented on the central role of alienated labor in the aforementioned manuscripts, and their importance for Marxism.

Marcuse found himself disillusioned by something he had thought to be a radical critique of society and reality as they were. But his reception of Marx and Hegel introduced him to the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research. The Institute had assisted the Moscow-based Marx Engels Institute in the publishing of the *MEGA* and taken notice of Marcuse. It was Adorno who reviewed *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity* in one of the first issues of the *Journal of Social Research*.[5] Marcuse and Adorno would make a strange pair of siblings for the rest of their shared lives. Often they chose to deal with similar subjects at similar times, share core concepts and key figures in the work, and treat each other with admiration and jealousy. But the family novel/drama shall be of no further importance here.

Marcuse would become one of the central members of the Institute for Social Research for the coming decade. The recognition of the Old Left, as Marxism, that had collapsed into Stalinism, anarchism, and revisionist Social Democracy, as well as the reinscription of Marxism as "ruthless critique of everything existing" were the point of departure for what the Frankfurters called "critical theory of society."

While the Institute was well aware of the Trotskyist opposition of the 1930s, it did not see a possibility of contributing to this movement in a way that wasn't already being done in the theoretical work of its members. None of the members were experienced organizers or political leaders. Instead, Marcuse tried to trace back the history of Marxist revolutionary thought, which had also been brought up by Karl Korsch and Georg Lukács in their respective works of 1923, *Marxism and Philosophy* and *History and Class Consciousness*. In his book *Reason and Revolution* (1941), Marcuse traced the essence of Marxist critique back to the negative character of Hegel's dialectic. Moreover, Marcuse tried to combat the trope that Hegelianism was at the core of fascist ideas. It was by no means a "Heidegger-Marxist" approach to the question of Hegel. This did in fact happen in the 1930s, but in France and under the leadership of Alexandre Kojève. Marcuse explained not only why Marxism could not be a philosophy, but how it was the only genuine attempt to live up to the task that Hegel had given to it in the 19th century: to make the world philosophical. Marxism had to realize the socialist revolution that had been going on in society, and this revolution would pave the way for a society which could become philosophical to overcome the need for philosophy. Marcuse did not try to resurrect an ontology in his return to Hegel and Marx. It seems bizarre when Andrew Feenberg claims that Marcuse "failed to develop an explicit phenomenological ontology,"[6] because that clearly was not Marcuse's aim. Marcuse truly became a Marxist, because he did not seek to provide a political philosophy, but explicate the political within the realm of philosophy and thought.

Marcuse, at the moment of Marxism's self-liquidation in theory and praxis, outlined its critical kernel as not a positivist ideology, but a negative critique. At the same time, and with the shared aim, Adorno and Horkheimer wrote *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944/47). *Reason and Revolution*, possibly the best introduction to dialectics, was published shortly before Marcuse and the Institute parted ways. Much like Lenin went to the library to study Hegel's *Science of Logic* (1812–16), Marcuse, Adorno, and Horkheimer wrote about Marxism and dialectics, while the world they came from was being snuffed out in gas and fire. While trying to uphold Lenin's maxim to organize Marxism as "a club for the materialist friends of the Hegelian dialectic,"[7] they were painfully aware of the obscure and even necrophilic character of their enterprise.

Marcuse had to get a job on his own in 1942, because the Institute's financial situation grew more and more desperate. But he and his former colleagues stayed in touch, and Marcuse drafted a piece in 1947, which was supposed to appear in a relaunch of the *Journal for Social*

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Statement of purpose

Taking stock of the universe of positions and goals that constitutes Leftist politics today, we are left with the disquieting suspicion that a deep commonality underlies the apparent variety: What exists today is built upon the desiccated remains of what was once possible.

In order to make sense of the present, we find it necessary to disentangle the vast accumulation of positions on the Left and to evaluate their saliency for the possible reconstitution of emancipatory politics in the present. Doing this implies a reconsideration of what is meant by the Left.

Our task begins from what we see as the general disenchantment with the present state of progressive politics. We feel that this disenchantment cannot be cast off by sheer will, by simply "carrying on the fight," but must be addressed and itself made an object of critique. Thus we begin with what immediately confronts us.

The *Platypus Review* is motivated by its sense that the Left is disoriented. We seek to be a forum among a variety of tendencies and approaches on the Left—not out of a concern with inclusion for its own sake, but rather to provoke disagreement and to open shared goals as sites of contestation. In this way, the recriminations and accusations arising from political disputes of the past may be harnessed to the project of clarifying the object of Leftist critique.

The *Platypus Review* hopes to create and sustain a space for interrogating and clarifying positions and orientations currently represented on the Left, a space in which questions may be raised and discussions pursued that would not otherwise take place. As long as submissions exhibit a genuine commitment to this project, all kinds of content will be considered for publication.

About the Platypus Affiliated Society
The Platypus Affiliated Society, established in December 2006, organizes reading groups, public fora, research and journalism focused on problems and tasks inherited from the "Old" (1920s–30s), "New" (1960s–70s) and post-political (1980s–90s) Left for the possibilities of emancipatory politics today.

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Ecosocialism and degrowth are great ways to become irrelevant

David McMullen

ECOSOCIALISM IS NOW well entrenched in the "Left," and is endorsed by many long-established sects. Proponents believe the deteriorating natural environment has created an urgent need to cast off capitalism and adopt this new green and crunchy variety of socialism. We will then be able to cease growing the world economy and start degrowing to a lower, steady state. Only in this way can we remain within "planetary boundaries"; for the present system cannot do this, with capitalist competition dictating both growth through the treadmill of accumulation and an indifference to environmental costs that do not show up on company balance sheets. Their slogan is "system change not climate change."

I certainly agree that capitalism cannot deliver degrowth, but I also believe that a classless society based on social ownership, the only alternative to the present system, cannot deliver it either. Indeed, it requires continued growth and not degrowth. And in the case of the "Global South" this has to be über-growth. Now, even if I am wrong on this second point, and a green nirvana is possible and desirable, no new society with its own economy could be established in a relevant timeframe. So, if we need to get rid of capitalism to avoid ecocatastrophe, we are in strife.

Leading ecosocialist John Bellamy Foster whistles in the dark about the prospects by banking on ecosocialism coming to power on the back of a mass movement spurred into action by increasing eco-disasters but in sufficient time to avert eco-Armageddon.[1] However, creating a new ecosocialist global order would be a protracted process. An ecosocialist movement would have to emerge from obscurity, gain widespread support, and be able to take power in the larger economies and successfully run them. The resistance to overcome would be considerable and certainly violent.

Decoupling from nature

I believe it would be preferable to take a less grim view, and endeavor instead to do a better job of prodding and harassing our masters into taking far more effective action in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and ending our destruction of the biosphere. This is basically about well-directed government funding, and appropriate carrots and sticks.

On the biosphere front, there are a range of tasks. According to environmental scientist Erle Ellis,[2] these include: greatly reducing our impact on natural areas; returning land and water to nature as we increase their productivity in food production; reducing agricultural contaminants and making farming less hostile to other life; helping vulnerable native species to survive in exotic-dominated environments; getting people out of the countryside and into densely populated cities that are also increasingly home to other flora and fauna; and reducing and better managing industrial and mining pollution, and domestic waste.

There has to be far more government engagement with these issues. This has to be transparent and scrutinized by those who want results. Solution-oriented research has to be vastly increased. Laws against clearing of tropical forests have to be enforced.

On the greenhouse-emissions front, the primary problem is the low pain tolerance. People in the richer countries have a limited appetite for expensive emissions reductions while those in the poorer countries are unwilling to even begin the reduction process. This means far greater stress has to be put on developing the technologies that will take the pain out of zero emissions. However, at the moment public funding for research, development, demonstration, and initial deployment in the relevant areas is far too low. While steadily increasing in recent years, global public R&D spending was still only a measly $44 billion (USD) in 2022.[3] Nevertheless, despite poor funding, the amount of innovation in the last decade has been remarkable. Better resourcing is bound to bring faster and better results.

Wind, solar and batteries have become more efficient and cheaper, and offshore renewables are the new frontier. However, longer-term energy storage has to become less costly. This will be required wherever renewables take on the major share of electricity output. Also, we seem to have been putting too many eggs in the renewable basket given that some regions have poorer renewable resources than others, and electric power is not the only form of energy required.

Nuclear power, for example, should be receiving more love and attention. Indeed, there is the option of slotting nuclear reactors into existing fossil-fuel power plants and using the existing generating equipment, infrastructure, and grid.[4] Enhanced geothermal energy could be used in a similar way if the technologies pan out as hoped.[5] The underground heat would be available no matter where the old power plant is located. Given the large number of fossil-fuel power plants in emerging economies that still have many years of useful life in them, this retrofitting could be an attractive way to go.

We are nowhere near a "hydrogen economy" but there is notable progress. We have had the recent "discovery" that hydrogen remains in its elemental state in vast subterranean deposits.[6] Ongoing efforts are being made to bring down water-electrolysis costs so that it can compete with natural gas reforming.[7] Hydrogen trucks and tractors are beginning to appear.[8] Airbus says it will have large hydrogen-powered passenger aircraft available from 2035.[9]

Industrial processes have to be decarbonized. We are beginning to see progress in the development of "green" cement,[10] steel,[11] and aluminum.[12]

The other greenhouse gasses, particularly methane and nitrous oxide (N_2O), have to be dealt with. Agriculture is the primary culprit in both cases. Cow and sheep digestion causes most of the methane emissions. Strategies being developed include feed additives, improving feed efficiency, genetic selection, and manure management. Then there is the move to plant-based meat alternatives and cultured meat. In the case of N_2O the problem is inefficient use of nitrogen fertilizer.[13] Prevention measures include: ensuring the fertilizer is delivered to the plant, when it can use it, through precision farming methods; using chemicals that impede microbes responsible for creating N2O; and genetically modifying a microbe that can directly supply nitrogen to plants.[14] Better detection and measurement of methane emissions from fossil-fuel extraction and landfills is expected to prompt more effective abatement measures. Research and development into direct air capture of CO_2 is being pursued and will certainly be needed when the task is to bring down accumulated CO_2 levels later this century. R&D and pilot projects make sense at the moment.

While doing its best to help build a movement that presses the government for more effective policies, a genuine Left would certainly not pass up the opportunity to point out how capitalism is a poor performer when it comes to avoiding and fixing environmental problems. There are various "market failures." Environmental damage is an external cost so there is no market incentive to do anything about it. Even where a price is placed on emissions or other environmental damage, there is still the public good or free-rider problem that limits spending on developing cleaner technologies. These new technologies may also not be welcomed by incumbent firms if they devalue their existing plant. Capitalism also has "government failure" where special interests undermine effective action. This would explain why governments have concentrated so much on funding renewable energy while starving research and development, and why they have shackled the nuclear power industry.

Innovations such as those discussed above that aim to reduce our impact on the natural environment, while we still grow the economy, have come to be called "decoupling."[15] This means our production has a decreasing impact even when it involves increasing amounts of energy and materials. We leave more land and water for nature, and stop using the atmosphere as a waste dump. This decoupling so far has been quite limited and localized. It has to become global and be on a scale large enough to reduce impacts to acceptable levels. "Decouple rather than degrowth" ought to be our catch-cry.

Degrowthers are not impressed

Degrowthers are not impressed by the decoupling solution. They have three arguments that I can make out. Firstly, decoupling from some environmental impacts just means greater "coupling" with other impacts. Secondly, decoupling is bound to be temporary as long as products are made of materials or consume them in their production. Thirdly, any decoupling will be too slow or too late given the urgency of achieving zero emissions and protecting the biosphere. Let us look at these three arguments in turn.

Decoupling just means new kinds of coupling

Giorgos Kallis reminds us that past decoupling was indeed just a new and greater form of coupling, and contends that this would also be the case with any present or future decoupling. Techno-fixes just cause new problems down the road:

> Previous "substitutions" (from forest trees to fossil fuels, or the mythical one from whales to kerosene that the eco-modernizers love the most) did not reduce environmental damage; they scaled it up. Forests spared, climate screwed. Georgescu-Roegen's key insight was not that there are entropic limits to growth (even if there are, they are not that relevant for our time frame). It was that increasing rates of energy use unavoidably speed up disorder, aka "entropy". Oil, which seemed comparatively "clean" when first found, disordered the climate. The disorder nuclear radioactivity will bring is not hard to guess.[16]

The reference to "entropy" is just mumbo jumbo and I will leave it at that. On nuclear power, he has a number of objections. He says firstly that the number of accidents can only increase with an exponential growth in reactors. If there is a one in a million chance of a reactor having a serious accident and you have one million reactors, you can expect to have an accident. But we need to keep in mind a few things: future reactors will be safer; the effect of past nuclear accidents has been greatly exaggerated by the anti-nuclear lobby; and a world with a very large number of nuclear reactors will be more economically advanced than we are, and far better able to deal with any eventuality.

Kallis says that supporters of nuclear power assume that from here to eternity we will have the capacity to deal with nuclear reactors. Elsewhere, he explicitly refers to the prospect of a civilization downturn.[17] All I will say is that I have no interest in making provisions for a human race that has regressed to some backward state. Kallis also raises the specter of earthquakes. However, according to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, existing plants are already earthquake proof, and you can of course avoid placing them on fault lines.[18]

This radiophobia is shared by Fred Magdoff and Chris Williams, who chime in with the usual claims about the many safety problems associated with the operation of nuclear plants and the safe disposal of nuclear waste that can last for thousands of years.[19] Jason Hickel takes a different tack. He sees nuclear power as part of the mix but warns that it would be a dangerous gamble to rely too heavily on them, because if we do not manage to stabilize the climate, "nuclear sites will be vulnerable to severe storms, rising seas and other disasters that could turn them into radiation bombs."[20] Given that nuclear power plants are basically concrete and steel bunkers I am sure they could be designed to withstand the worst kind of weather. They would certainly fare better than solar or wind farms.

Now, let us delve further and see if there are any problems with other technologies being researched or adopted with the aim of reducing our impact on the atmosphere, oceans, land, waterways, and biosphere.

What about mineral extraction?[21] It is certainly true that renewable power generation requires more materials in its construction than fossil-fuel power, and batteries are materials intensive. However, there is not the large fuel extraction of coal and gas power, and we also have the option of adopting nuclear and enhanced geothermal power that require the least extraction.

Agriculture will have to become more capital-, and hence material-, intensive if it is to reduce emissions, and the use of land and water. This will involve more irrigation equipment, IT, robotics, and factory processes. However, there is nothing to suggest that the required materials would contribute to the extraction industry being dirtier than it already is. Furthermore, agriculture will still be a small share of overall material consumption. With extraction, the main focus should be ensuring that it becomes progressively cleaner and more efficient in its use of water.

What about the use of land?[22] Wind and solar are quite land-intensive, and their location would need to be chosen to avoid serious environmental impacts. The greater need for transmission lines is a similar problem. At the same time, solar power could to some extent be combined with other uses. It can be attached to buildings and other structures or combined with food production, given that fruit and vegetables require different parts of the solar spectrum, and prefer shade for some of the day. Also, offshore wind and solar avoid the land problem altogether. Nuclear and geothermal power take up very little land area. As for the distribution of hydrogen, I cannot imagine it would be worse in land use than fossil-fuel distribution. When looking at land use we of course should keep in mind the prospects for land-saving technologies in agriculture and human settlement. The eventual stabilization of the population later this century will also constrain the demand for land.

The techno-fixes we have been discussing do not seem to entail major, new water-use problems. Besides, any additional use would tend to be dwarfed by the adoption of economizing technologies in agriculture and other sectors.

Replacing combustion heating with geothermal heat pumps does not appear to add any new hazards. And there will be limited growth in heating because the population is not expected to grow in the cooler climates.

Decoupling is only temporary

A second argument against decoupling is that it can only be temporary if products or inputs are made of anything material. While you can reduce the amount of materials in a physical product you cannot eliminate them entirely. So, even if we manage to reduce our impact on land, air, freshwater, and oceans from our present output of materials to acceptable levels, their continual growth will ensure that eventually they will breach those levels.

As Hickel points out, you can reduce the amount of wood in a wooden table but you cannot reduce it to zero:

> There are physical limits to material efficiency, and once we start to reach them then the scale effect of growth drives material use back up in the long run. For instance you might be able to produce a wooden table more efficiently, but you can't produce a table out of nothing. In the end you'll need a minimum amount of wood, and once you reach that limit, then any growth in table production is going to come along with a corresponding growth in wood use.[23]

And Kallis reminds us that "Infinite growth powered by wind energy, for example, would require infinite land devoted to wind farms, which is physically and logically impossible."[24] Increased material efficiency both in production and in the use of the final product can only take you so far. A wood table will always require some timber, and timber will always require some amount of land and water at the expense of nature. Wind power will always require some land and component materials no matter how efficient we make wind-power generation or our use of electricity.

Even substitutions are no help in the long term. You could make tables out of aluminum or plastic instead of wood. But this would present similar problems. More material extraction, transporting, and processing is bound eventually to take up more land and water, both directly and indirectly. What was within acceptable bounds would at some point cease to be. Furthermore, we need to take into account that increasing amounts of physical objects take up space, and this enlarges human settlement and reduces the areas left to nature. With the pollution that accompanies many production and consumption activities we have a similar problem. Only if we eliminate all pollution can we permanently decouple from it.

So, how should we respond to all this? First off, one very important form of decoupling — that from greenhouse-gas emissions — has the prospect of being permanent. But beyond that they are quite correct because they are simply expressing the truism that you cannot infinitely increase production of stuff on a finite planet. But how relevant is this?

Leaving aside greenhouse emissions, our production of agricultural products is arguably the source of the greatest impact on the environment. It is responsible for 70% of human water withdrawals and occupies almost half of habitable land. While this sector's use of these resources are still to peak, they will come down dramatically later this century as a result of increased productivity, particularly through removing animals from most meat production, and a slowdown in the growth of food production as the population stabilizes or possibly declines later this century. The end of population growth will also be accompanied by greater land efficiency in areas of human settlement as we build more high-rise housing and perhaps burrow more into the ground. At the same time urbanites will be able to leave more water for nature as they become increasingly efficient in its use.

Meeting increasing amounts of energy with onshore wind and solar will indeed place an increasing demand on land. However, the impact can be mitigated by choosing less sensitive locations, and, as already mentioned, in the case of solar by placing them on existing structures or coexisting with some types of crops. Then there are low land-use alternatives such as offshore wind and solar as well as nuclear and geothermal.

Industrialization and construction of infrastructure and housing in the developing countries will cause their materials consumption to increase dramatically in the next half century. However, a large part of this will be construction materials that are not a major cause of environmental impact. Furthermore, this surge will eventually slow down as this basic development task is completed.

Even just with the technologies we can expect to be deploying this century, decoupling has quite a long time horizon. This can be extended indefinitely when we take into account the fact that the science and technology of future centuries will give our descendants vastly greater ability to both harness and care for the natural environment. These would no doubt seem to us like magic if someone were to come back and tell us about them, much like someone now traveling back to 1900 with a dozen copies of *Wired* magazine.

Decoupling too slow

Degrowthers say that decoupling on its own would be too slow to avert catastrophe. Greenhouse emissions must come down as quickly as possible, and the sixth mass extinction is just around the corner. They make the obvious point that converting growing levels of production capacity to zero emissions will take longer, and emit more gasses and cause more environmental damage than if we abandon a lot of that capacity and produce less.[25]

There is also no doubt that the general inadequacy of our greenhouse-emission efforts has built in considerable delays. Even if we put on the accelerator, there will be a long lead time as technologies reach sufficient maturity, supply-chain capacity is created, and facilities are constructed. However, no matter how pessimistic you are, the fact still remains that ecosocialist

degrowth is just non-operational silliness and that doing what we can to mitigate and prepare for problems under the present system is the only policy. That means getting behind decoupling and also putting special stress on the kinds of development that will help people, particularly the most vulnerable, to deal with the impact of climate change and other environmental impacts.

The revolution needs growth

Not only is continued economic growth possible, it is also highly desirable given that economic development has scarcely started in much of the world. On top of that, it is a basic tenet of Marxism that the creation of a modern industrial base by capitalism is the primary prerequisite for revolution, and is the driver of the other two prerequisites. These are the transformation of most people into employees of capital, who have everything to gain from revolution, and the dismantling of much of the old pre-capitalist cultural conditions that Marx referred to as the "muck of the ages."[26]

Marx was quite clear on this: "The development of the productive forces of social labour is capital's historic mission and justification. For that very reason, it unwittingly creates the material conditions for a higher form of production."[27] Reaching a high level of development creates the prospect of sharing material prosperity, humanizing work and having ample free time. We have a long history showing how we are not prepared to share the opposite — poverty and toil. These two blights have been the very basis of class society. So, we need to achieve a level of material conditions where the benefits of living in a convivial classless society considerably outweigh the benefits of being a "winner" under dog-eat-dog capitalism.

Marx makes the point in *The German Ideology*: "this development of productive forces . . . is an absolutely necessary practical premise, because without it privation, want is merely made general, and with want the struggle for necessities would begin again, and all the old filthy business would necessarily be restored."[28]

In *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (1880), Engels makes the additional point that only with capitalist development of the productive forces is it possible for a complex society to do without a privileged stratum:

> The separation of society into an exploiting and an exploited class, a ruling and an oppressed class, was the necessary consequences of the deficient and restricted development of production in former times. So long as the total social labor only yields a produce which but slightly exceeds that barely necessary for the existence of all; so long, therefore, as labor engages all or almost all the time of the great majority of the members of society — so long, of necessity, this society is divided into classes. Side by side with the great majority, exclusively bond slaves to labor, arises a class freed from directly productive labor, which looks after the general affairs of society: the direction of labor, State business, law, science, art, etc. It is, therefore, the law of division of labor that lies at the basis of the division into classes.[29]

The newly discovered green Marx

There have been considerable efforts by "eco-Marxists" to rebut the view that Marx was a "productivist" and to reassign him to the green pantheon. They point to his notes and writings on such matters as soil degradation and deforestation that display a concern about unsustainable relations with nature. Be that as it may, his support for growth is certainly attested to by a number of well-known remarks.

In Part I of his "Critique of the Gotha Program" (1875), Marx refers to the need to set aside a portion of the social product for the expansion of production.[30] A few paragraphs down where he discusses the condition required for the higher stage of communism in which everyone contributes according to their ability and receives according to their needs, he includes the requirement that "all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly."[31] I suspect he would consider the present level of development in the richer countries sufficient to pass this test but not the rest of the world where over 80% of people live.

Then we have Engels in *Anti-Dühring* (1877) referring to how the advent of socialism would bring about the "constantly accelerated development of the productive forces and . . . a practically unlimited increase of production itself."[32] The drafts of the book were all discussed with Marx so it is not just Engels being "productivist."

John Bellamy Foster contends that Marx and Engels would change their tune under current conditions: "However, the context in which they were writing was not today's 'full-world economy,' but rather a still early stage of industrialization. In the period of industrial development, extending from the beginning of the eighteenth century until the first Earth Day in 1970, world industrial productive potential increased in size around 1,730 times, which from a nineteenth-century perspective, would have seemed 'a practically unlimited increase.'"[33]

But much of the world is still in an early stage of industrialization, and the growth number he cites is silly. At the beginning of the 18th century, industrial development would have been microscopic. So the level in 1970 is inevitably going to be an astronomical increase. However, if we just take the growth over the 20th century in GDP, the increase in size according to the IMF is a less spectacular 19 times, and GDP per capita five times.[34]

Kohei goes further than most, and claims that Marx in his later years became a deep green, seeking a return to village life, and repudiated historical materialism and the view that capitalism was preparing the grounds for a future classless society.[35] He finds this new Marx in his correspondence with Russian populist Vera Zasulich where the latter speculates about the revolution in Russia being based on traditional communal ownership. However, it is easy to see that Saito's interpretation is nonsense.

In the letter Marx says that his studies had convinced him that the commune would be "the fulcrum for social regeneration in Russia" as long as it does not succumb to harmful influences and is then "assured the normal conditions for spontaneous development."[36] Furthermore, the 1882 preface to the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) makes clear that Marx is not thinking of abandoning modern industry and returning to the Middle Ages: "If the Russian Revolution becomes the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that both complement each other, the present Russian common ownership of land may serve as the starting point for a communist development."[37] Marx makes the point even clearer in the first draft of the letter to Zasulich where he wrote: "Precisely because it is contemporaneous with capitalist production, the rural commune may appropriate all its positive achievements without undergoing its [terrible] frightful vicissitudes."[38]

Consumerism

Ecosocialists contend that people in the richer capitalist countries simply do not need so much stuff and that they are victims of "consumerism" encouraged by the manipulation of advertising. According to Magdoff and Williams, advertising and marketing "convert people to consumption as a way of life, a path to personal happiness, a means of overcoming feelings of emptiness, loneliness, and dissatisfaction that are generated by a system that stresses individualism, competition, and consumerism."[39] At the same time they "make people feel inadequate in their bodies and lifestyles."

So, ecosocialists consider the moderate level of affluence achieved by the average person in these countries as mainly unnecessary and indeed damaging. You could certainly say that about some of this consumption. It is affected by our behavioral or psychological problems generated by capitalism. Retail therapy fills an emotional hole and caters to feelings of inadequacy. Many people are fashion victims. Bad habits and perversities lead to consumption that subtracts from our wellbeing, and a lot of health care is only repairing the damage done by unhealthy consumption. Then there are positional goods purchased for display rather than utility which are part and parcel of class society.

But having said this, there is still a great deal of production that is clearly undersupplied. We need a better and larger housing stock with all the modern conveniences, rapid and convenient transportation, education infrastructure, a diverse food supply for a healthy lifestyle, every hospital having 5-star accommodation, and a healthcare system that takes life expectancy up to 100 and beyond. Then there are much better disaster-response arrangements and an asteroid-defense system.

On top of that there should be more consumption resulting from healthy habits and behavior. For example, we need more gyms, sports fields, sports clothing, artificial ski slopes, skateboard rinks, garden supplies, and equipment for science hobbyists.

Degrowthers claim that needs are limited and that beyond a certain income we are no happier. It is true that people are sometimes "happier" in poorer societies. They live under more traditional conditions where everything is settled and certain, and they are more embedded in the community. They become unhappier with more stuff because they now live under the alienating conditions of capitalism, not because they have more stuff. And the solution is not to go back to traditional poverty but to go forwards to an advanced post-capitalist society.

It is also true that, at any point in time, as income increases, its marginal utility declines. An extra dollar meets a less pressing need than the previous dollar. However, over time new and better products become available to better meet our needs or create new ones. Those extra dollars then start to have more utility.

Planned obsolescence can be a source of unnecessary consumption. Manufacturers colluding to limit the lifespan of lightbulbs is a classic historical example.[40] The fashion industry introduces new styles every year. The latest car model is a positional good that you need to replace regularly. However, this problem can be exaggerated. Most people are not watching for the latest fashions, and cars go to the second-hand market, not the scrap heap. There is also a conflation with genuine obsolescence. You do not need electronic goods to last forever if they are rapidly improving.

It is also true that we could share a lot of things rather than owning them individually, and without too much inconvenience.[41] Phone apps that allow you to make bookings are encouraging more of this. Car share is an example. You would also expect more sharing in a future society. Under capitalist conditions people's behavior works against it. You cannot always rely on other people to look after what is being shared. There is the problem of dealing with the "challenging" people that capitalism generates. And people under this system are far more withdrawn than they should be because of the psychological battering they receive. They would rather not deal with others.

There are of course considerable limits on the benefits of sharing. The things being shared will receive more wear. A washing machine that is constantly in use will have to be more durable and costly or replaced more often than one only used a few times a week. Also, it is difficult to share something that everyone wants to use at the same time.

What about the rich? Their high consumption is both for display, and for multiple extra layers of comfort and convenience. It is indeed wasteful. However, it is matched by the want of the poorest section of society. We need a transfer of consumption here, not an overall reduction. |P

[1] John Bellamy Foster, "There is still time for an ecological revolution to prevent Hothouse Earth," *Climate and Capitalism* (August 25, 2018), available online at <https://climateandcapitalism.com/contact-climate-and-capitalism/>.

[2] Erle C. Ellis, "To Conserve Nature in the Anthropocene, Half Earth Is Not Nearly Enough," *One Earth* 1, no. 2 (October 25, 2019): 163–67, available online at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590332219300909>.

[3] International Energy Agency, *World Energy Investment 2023* (2023), available online at <https://www.iea.org/reports/world-energy-investment-2023>.

[4] See J. Hansen, et al., "Investigating Benefits and Challenges of Converting Retiring Coal Plants into Nuclear Plants: Nuclear Fuel Cycle and Supply Chain" (September 13, 2022), prepared for the U.S. Department of Energy, available online at <https://fuelcycleoptions.inl.gov/SiteAssets/SitePages/Home/C2N2022Report.pdf>.

[5] See June Kim, "Enhanced geothermal systems: 10 Breakthrough Technologies 2024," *MIT Technology Review*, June 8, 2024, available online at <https://www.technologyreview.com/2024/01/08/1085112/enhanced-geothermal-systems-renewable-energy-drilling-breakthrough-technologies/>, and Loz Blain, "Fusion tech is set to unlock near-limitless ultra-deep geothermal energy," *New Atlas*, February 25, 2022, available online at <https://newatlas.com/energy/quaise-deep-geothermal-millimeter-wave-drill/>.

[6] See the Office of Communications and Publishing of the United States Geological Survey, "The Potential for Geological Hydrogen for Next-Generation Energy" (April 13, 2023), available online at <https://www.usgs.gov/news/featured-story/potential-geologic-hydrogen-next-generation-energy>.

[7] See Leonardo Vidas and Rui Castro, "Recent Developments on Hydrogen Production Technologies: State-of-the-Art Review with a Focus on Green-Electrolysis," *Applied Sciences* 11, no 23 (December 2021), available online at <https://doi.org/10.3390/app112311363>.

[8] See "Hydrogen Trucks Market: Hydrogen Trucks Market By Product, Application, Range & Region | Forecast 2023 to 2033," *Future Market Insights* (December 2022), available online at <https://www.futuremarketinsights.com/reports/hydrogen-trucks-market>, and Peter Hill, "Big tractor engine makers bet on hydrogen as future fuel," *Farmers Weekly*, February 3, 2024, available online at <https://www.fwi.co.uk/machinery/technology/big-tractor-engine-makers-bet-on-hydrogen-as-future-fuel>.

[9] Airbus, "ZEROe: Towards the world's first hydrogen-powered commercial aircraft," available online at <https://www.airbus.com/en/innovation/low-carbon-aviation/hydrogen/zeroe>.

[10] See "Green Cement: Definition, Types, Advantages, and Applications," *The Constructor*, available online at <https://theconstructor.org/concrete/green-cement-types-applications/5568/>.

[11] See "Global Steel Plant Tracker," *Global Energy Monitor*, available online at <https://globalenergymonitor.org/projects/global-steel-plant-tracker/>.

[12] See the Aluminum Association, "Anode Technology a Game-Changer for Aluminum," available online at <https://www.aluminum.org/anode-technology-game-changer-aluminum>.

[13] See Ula Chrobak, "The world's forgotten greenhouse gas," *BBC*, June 3, 2021, available online at <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20210603-nitrous-oxide-the-worlds-forgotten-greenhouse-gas>.

[14] See Pivot Bio, "Building Better Nitrogen: Harnessing the Power of Nature," available online at <https://www.pivotbio.com/our-technology>.

[15] See Linus Blomqvist, Ted Nordhaus, and Michael Shellenberger, *Nature Unbound: Decoupling for Conservation* (Oakland: Breakthrough Institute, 2015), available online at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339399741_Nature_Unbound_Decoupling_for_Conservation>.

[16] Giorgos Kallis, *In defense of degrowth: Opinions and minifestos*, ed. Aaron Vansintjan (Brussels: Uneven Earth Press, 2018), 60, available online at <https://indefenseofdegrowth.com/download/?from=free>.

[17] Giorgos Kallis, "An Ecomodernist Mishmash," *Degrowth* (May 7, 2015), available online at <https://degrowth.info/blog/an-ecomodernist-mishmash>.

[18] U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, "Backgrounder on Seismic Reviews at U.S. Nuclear Power Plants" (June 2018), available online at <https://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/fact-sheets/fs-seismic-issues.html>.

[19] Fred Magdoff and Chris Williams, *Creating an Ecological Society: Toward a Revolutionary Transformation* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2017), 91.

[20] Jason Hickel, *Less is More: How Degrowth Will Save the World* (London: Penguin Random House, 2020).

[21] See World Nuclear Association, "Mineral Requirements for Electricity Generation" (updated May 7, 2024), available online at <https://world-nuclear.org/information-library/energy-and-the-environment/mineral-requirements-for-electricity-generation>.

[Endnotes 22–41 available online.]

"Marcuse," continued from page 2

Looking back, it seems that both Adorno and Marcuse were right and wrong. Adorno was right that the New Left would not bring forth any force capable of implementing Marxist praxis again, and that pseudo-praxis would damage and deform the concepts of theory and praxis and their relation even further. And Marcuse was right that the New Left would change society, and constituted an avant-garde, hinting at a new society to come. While the concept of the Left would never be the same again after the New Left, the new society of neoliberalism, for which the New Left was the avant-garde, would indeed be the ever-same, the eternal recurrence of democracy with fascist characteristics.

While Marcuse never condemned the New Left, of which he was thought to be a part, he did never claim that it was or could be a revolutionary agent or that it had lived up to the tasks Marxism had proclaimed as the necessary next step. Marcuse's wager was that the New Left could have become a mediation that might help to bring forward a situation in which socialism could become a practical task once more. This has yet to happen. In the 21st century, the Old and New Left seem equally dead.

Andrew Feenberg complains that Marcuse is being forgotten. Feenberg claims that Marcuse was the forethinker of the New Left, and that the political horizon of the New Left was the only thing we still have in the 21st century, that New Leftism was the only Leftism we were capable of. While the latter might be true, selling this as virtue, as progress on the critical thought of Marcuse, might be devotion. But it's a cannibal's devotion to the victim, whose brain he is chewing.

Like almost no one on the Left, Marcuse never backed down from his responsibility as a teacher and a theorist. Being true to Herbert Marcuse's Marxism must mean to defend him, not only against his enemies, but especially against his devotees. |P

[1] Video of the teach-in is available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rHBKhhm1SWk>.

[2] Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany).

[3] Jürgen Habermas, "Psychic Thermidor and the Rebirth of Rebellious Subjectivity," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 24/25 (1980): 1–12. This was given as a talk on March 14, 1980, on the occasion of a "Symposium on the thought of Herbert Marcuse," hosted by the Philosophy Department of the University of California San Diego, and was included in *Marcuse: Critical Theory & the Promise of Utopia*, eds. Robert Pippin, Andrew Feenberg, Charles P. Webel, et al. (South Haley: Bergin & Garvey, 1988).

[4] *Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe.*

[5] Theodor Wiesengrund-Adorno, "*Hegels Ontologie und die Grundlegung einer Theorie der Geschichtlichkeit*," *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* 1, no. 3 (1932): 409–10.

[6] Andrew Feenberg, "Marcuse: Reason, Imagination, and Utopia," *Radical Philosophy Review* 21, no. 2 (2018): 271–98, available online at <https://www.sfu.ca/~andrewf/Marcuse%20Utopia.pdf>.

[7] V. I. Lenin, "On the Significance of Militant Materialism" (1922), in *Lenin Collected Works*, vol. 33 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), 227–36, available online at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1922/mar/12.htm>.

[8] Herbert Marcuse, "Critique of Neo-Freudian Revisionism," in *Eros and Civilization* (1955), available online at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/marcuse/works/eros-civilisation/epilogue.htm>.

[9] Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance," in Robert Paul Woff, Barrington Moore, Jr., and Herbert Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), 87.

[10] Leszek Kołakowski, "Herbert Marcuse: Marxism as a totalitarian Utopia of the New Left," in *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Origin, Growth, and Dissolution*, vol. III, *The Breakdown*, trans. P. S. Falla (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 406.

[11] See Karl Marx, "Part I," in "Critique of the Gotha Programme" (1875), available online at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/ch01.htm>.

[12] See Theodor Adorno, "Asylum for the homeless," in *Minima Moralia* (1951), available online at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1951/mm/>.

[13] Kołakowski, "Herbert Marcuse," 415.

[14] See Ewgeniy Kasakow, Dieter Ilius, Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands, "Krise im sozialistischen Lager: Revisionismus und Anti-Revisionismus" (January 26, 2024), which was part of the Platypus European Conference, available online at <https://www.youtube.com/live/LiYby-ScT8U>.

[15] Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance," 96.

[16] See, for example, V. I. Lenin, "Some Conclusions," in *"Left-Wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder: A Popular Essay in Marxian Strategy and Tactics* (1920), available online at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/lwc/>.

[17] Erin Hagood and Duyminh Tran, "Bridging theory and practice: An interview with Angela Davis," *Platypus Review* 138 (July–August 2021), available online at <https://platypus1917.org/2021/07/03/bridging-theory-and-practice-an-interview-with-angela-davis/>.

[18] Angela Davis, "Introduction to negative dialectics," *Platypus Review* 138 (July–August 2021), available online at <https://platypus1917.org/2021/07/03/introduction-to-negative-dialectics-seminar-paper/>.

[19] [French] Fixed capital.

[20] See Theodor W. Adorno, "Marginalia to Theory and Practice" (1969), in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 263.

[21] Herbert Marcuse, "Reflexion zu Theodor W. Adorno: Aus einem Gespräch mit Michaela Seiffe," *Hessischer Rundfunk*, August 24, 1969, published in *Theodor W. Adorno Zum Gedächtnis: Eine Sammlung*, ed. Herman Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971), 47–51, available online at <https://www.marcuse.org/herbert/people/adorno/71herbadorno.htm>.

Research in Germany, but never did. Instead it was later published with the title "33 Theses." This short text tried to take stock of the confused and disoriented concept of "Marxism" which appeared from under the smoke and ruins of WWII. Marcuse, like many Marxists, was afraid of a coming war between the Soviet Union-led bloc with the U.S.-led bloc, which he described as "neo-fascist." In these theses Marcuse made clear where he stood with regards to Lenin, the proletariat, and its once revolutionary parties:

> 3. Under these circumstances there is only one alternative for revolutionary theory: to ruthlessly and openly criticize both systems and to uphold without compromise orthodox Marxist theory against both. In the face of political reality such a position would be powerless, abstract and unpolitical, but when the political reality as a whole is false, the unpolitical position may be the only political truth.
>
> 4. The possibility of its political realization is itself a part of Marxist theory. The working class and the political praxis of the working class, and changing class relations (at the national and international level) continue to determine the conceptual development of theory, as they in turn are determined by it—not by the theory without praxis, but by the one which "seizes the masses." Realization is neither a criterion nor the content of Marxist truth, but the historical impossibility of realization is irreconcilable with it.
>
> 5. . . . Outside the Soviet camp there is no workers' movement "capable of revolution." The social democrats have become more rather than less bourgeois. The Trotskyist groups are divided and helpless. The communist parties are not willing (today), and thus also not capable of revolution, but they are the only anti-capitalist class organization of the proletariat and thu also not capable of revolution, but they are the only anticapitalist class organization of the proletariat and thus the only possible basis for revolution (today). But they are at the same time the tools of Soviet politics and as such hostile to the revolution (today). The problem lies in the unity within the communist parties of forces potentially capable of revolution with others hostile to revolution. . . .
>
> 32. While the unions in their traditional structure and organization represent a force hostile to revolution, the political workers' party remains the necessary subject of revolution. In the original Marxist conception the party does not play a decisive role. Marx assumed that the proletariat is driven to revolutionary action on its own, based on the knowledge of its own interests, as soon as revolutionary conditions are present. In the mean time monopoly capitalism has found the ways and means of economically, politically and culturally leveling (#12–15) the majority of the proletariat. The negation of this leveling *before* the revolution is impossible. The development has confirmed the correctness of the Leninist conception of the vanguard party as the subject of the revolution. It is true that the communist parties of today are not this subject, but it is just as true that only they can become it. Only in the theories of the communist parties is the memory of the revolutionary tradition alive, which can become the memory of the revolutionary goal once again; only its situation is so far outside the capitalist society that it can become a revolutionary situation again.
>
> 33. The political task then would consist in reconstructing revolutionary theory within the communist parties and working for the praxis appropriate to it. The task seems impossible today. But perhaps the relative independence from Soviet dictates, which this task demands, is present as a possibility in Western Europe's and West Germany's communist parties.

The reconstitution of revolutionary parties through the reconstruction of revolutionary theory for Marcuse meant what Lukács, Lenin, and Marx had meant when they were speaking about the party: the living memory of revolutionary experience, the carrier of class consciousness, that is, historical consciousness of the struggle for socialism. Marcuse was not trying to develop a theory for how to overthrow the international, totalitarian Bonapartist state. He was trying to rescue the last sparks of consciousness, that socialist revolution had this aim, and deemed society ready to realize this.

Instead of a rebirth of Marxism, capitalism and its international order of domination rose like a phoenix from the ashes. Marcuse saw that capitalism had rebirthed itself in the destructice orgy of WWII, that liberalism in the West and Stalinism in the East were rejuvenating themselves through a growing technological capacity for production and control, which seemed to integrate the working class ever more into its mirage of on-going and unstoppable progress.

The death of Stalin in 1953 and the rising Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. expressed a crisis of the status quo and seemed to open a chance for the renewal of emancipatory politics. Yet, Marcuse, once more parallel to Adorno, saw not only the lingering potential for a utopian perspective, but also its flipside: Just like the Marxist parties had turned into counter-revolutionary forces, all other means of liberation and production could and would become means of domination and destruction, as long as there was no subjective factor to seize these means for the goal of socialism.

Erich Fromm, who later on praised *Reason and Revolution*, had been asked to leave the Institute for Social Research in 1939. Fromm personally identified as a humanist, socialist, informed by religious ideals, and a fairly unpolitical Marx, with a complete avoidance of Lenin. But Fromm's political impact was not in the realm of politics, but in his writings on psychoanalysis, which Marcuse deemed to be an expression of a dominant trend, he found worthy to criticize in his book *Eros and Civilization* (1955).

Here Marcuse addresses capitalist society after "the collapse of the liberal era and of its promises" and the spreading totalitarian trend it had hailed in.[8] Liberalism for him had become a rescue of individuality at the cost of the individual; the ways to achieve happiness had been welded together with practices that perpetuated domination, servility, and other perverse forms of aggression against oneself and others. Marcuse flipped the argument that man was violent, animalistic, antisocially horny and far too limited by nature to ever be free from domination. Marcuse did not pose a better version of human nature against the conservative advertisers of proper psychoanalytic domestication, nor did he deny the dimension of nature and its influences.

Once more, Marcuse's devotees don't fail to surprise when they bring up that Marcuse wanted to go back to something. While Marcuse was well aware that humanity as a species-being needed to be redeemed, and that this could only happen in the future, the origin of man had yet to be reached. As he puts it his essay "Repressive Tolerance" (1965): "In the interplay of theory and practice, true and false solutions become distinguishable—never with the evidence of necessity, never as the positive, only with the certainty of a reasoned and reasonable chance, and with the persuasive force of the negative. For the true positive is the society of the future and therefore beyond definition arid determination, while the existing positive is that which must be surmounted."[9]

Another banger which the devotees love to throw on the record player is "Marcuse created a synthesis of Marx and Freud." Whatever this might be, Marcuse did no such thing. Marcuse showed how psychoanalysis, which had become a tool of oppression far more than emancipation, through Marxist critique, could still be understood as pointing to humanity's potentials at least as much as to its limitations, by submitting it to immanent dialectical critique. Marcuse showed the productive character of this negative approach: he did not try to make it into something else.

Eros and Civilization tried to deal with the most developed elements of bourgeois society in crisis, not fall behind them. If this is to be understood as a concession, it should be clear what kind: Marcuse understood Freud's psychoanalysis as the last bourgeois critique of bourgeois society. That Marxism failed to overcome bourgeois — really capitalist — society was not the fault of psychoanalytic theory. But the failure of the revolution and the defeat of Marxism made it impossible for Marcuse to ignore what role this new science played in society. Marcuse tried to point out the revolutionary potential in the mass de-subjectification through psychic mechanisms, much like Lenin tried to point out the revolutionary potential in imperialism. In this Marcuse demonstrated the intimate connection of critique and utopia in Marxism.

I do not know if the American hippie Jerry Rubin was inspired by *Eros and Civilization*, but Leszek Kołakowski was intellectually dishonest when he claimed that Rubin "is expressing . . . the true essence of Marcuse's Utopia," when Rubin claimed that "machines will henceforth do all the work and leave people free to copulate whenever and wherever they like."[10] It is dishonest, because Marcuse himself is clear that the limitation of sexuality to genital activity was itself a symptom of the deformation of human sexuality. Marcuse also did not think that work would simply be done by machines, but that humanity would use machines for stupefying work — as a means so that human work can be transformed from "life's prime need to life's prime want."[11] Marcuse's utopia was meant to be a critical function of the society he sought to overcome.

Marcuse's direct criticism of Fromm and other "revisionist psychoanalysts," and the whole of *Eros and Civilization* itself was intended as a means to combat the illusion that post-WWII liberalism could simply be reformed into a liberated society, without a fundamental transformation of everything existing. Marcuse's critique of the new psychoanalytic movement initiated by Fromm, et al. was a sophisticated argument for Adorno's statement that wrong life could not be lived rightly.[12] Marcuse's goal after WWII was to show the deep and problematic gap between socialism and liberalism that Marxism's critique had sought to overcome in the proletarian socialist revolution.

Psychology for Marcuse was a tool that had become central to the form that domination took in the 20th century. It had become part of political economy indeed, and it had gained this function in the counter-revolutionary movements of fascism and Great Society liberalism, which, to remind us, Marcuse had termed neo-fascism. Marcuse was dealing with questions of psychology because he sought to understand how the working class could have been integrated into the authoritarian society so smoothly after the defeat of Marxism.

Devotees and critics have often voiced a point of view, which is probably best addressed through Kołakowski once more, who was a passionate hater indeed, when he said that what Marcuse had to offer was "Marxism without the proletariat (irrevocably corrupted by the welfare state)" and "without history (as the vision of the future is not derived from a study of historical changes but from an intuition of true human nature)."[13]

Once more: Nature for Marcuse was not what "is" already, but what "ought" to be, following the Hegelian notion of true essence as a process, humanity's nature first and foremost as the ability to transform one's own nature in the process of history.

Saying that Marcuse's Marxism was "without the proletariat" is a prime example of shooting the messenger: while Marcuse was painfully aware that the proletariat was in no way ready to (re-)form a party, pick up guns, and overthrow the government in either the capitalist center or in the Soviet bloc, the proletariat, through the loss of its revolutionary leadership, had lost far more than its leadership; it had lost its historical mission of bringing about socialism. Marcuse was sober and correct when he pointed out that the masses of workers could not be mobilized in the way that its revolutionary organizations had thought hitherto. But this did not lead Marcuse to kiss the proletariat goodbye: Marcuse would repeat until the end of his life that no socialist revolution was possible without the independent political action of the proletariat. In no way, shape, or form did Marcuse claim that "a new revolutionary subject" was needed, that the students and radical minorities would take the place of the proletariat or that you didn't need a party for the revolution. Nonetheless, this is where enemies and devotees, lovers and haters of Marcuse, embrace each other and hold hands once more.

But it is impossible to speak about these aspects without closer examination of the relationship of critical theory and the New Left.

As we heard yesterday,[14] the New Left did not begin in 1968, but rather in the early 50s. When Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* was published in 1964, both he and Adorno had been teachers of the New Left for about a decade. Both thinkers were emphasizing what they took as the most important lessons of Marxism after World Revolution had failed: the non-identical character, the gap between theory and praxis, how this gap had been turned into a seemingly insurmountable abyss, and the fact that this was historically produced and thus could be changed again.

One-Dimensional Man focused on the depth of the lack of revolutionary subjectivity and its objective conditions in what Adorno called "the administered society." These objective conditions for Marcuse were expressing themselves in the ever more encompassing technology of everyday life, but also its ideological and intellectual forms. One-dimensionality for Marcuse meant "the neutralization of opposites": "The avenues of entrance are closed to the meaning of words and ideas other than the established one—established by the publicity of the powers that be, and verified in their practices. . . . Thus the process of reflection ends where it started: in the given conditions and relations. Self-validating, the argument of the discussion repels the contradiction because the antithesis is redefined in terms of the thesis."[15]

It is important to emphasize that for Marcuse this wasn't only the case for the "bourgeois" public sphere, but also in the self-acclaimed "Marxism" of the time. Yet, both Adorno and Marcuse saw the Leninist party conception as a necessary precondition to forge the proletariat into a political agent that could bring about socialism. But both of them also remembered Lenin's dialectical maxim, that revolutionary strategy always needed to focus on the next step.[16] For both, this meant to make conscious that the working class had not been undone by industrial society after WWII, but that proletarian class consciousness did not exist anymore, because Marxism in its defeat, through Stalinism and Social Democracy, had been turned into anti-Marxism, a mechanical doctrine of the unstoppable socialist revolution, which no longer needed an international organization. Both Marcuse and Adorno emphasized that the student movement, the New Left, could not organize a revolutionary mass workers' party, because there simply were no masses of revolutionary workers to organize. And the idea of an underground party for Marcuse would have been ridiculous, were it not so dangerous: Marcuse made clear to his followers that at the new height of capitalism's power, trying to form such a party would have been suicide, politically as well as in the flesh.

Lovers and haters, devotees and enemies, of both Marcuse and Adorno, were and are not willing to engage with the depth of the conflict that arose between Adorno and Marcuse, instead falling into what Adorno called "identity thinking" and Marcuse "one-dimensionality": they would fall into black-and-white thinking and turn the critical theorists into symbols for perceived programs. Marcuse and Adorno are turned into actors of a bad play, forced to embody the false antinomies the Left inhabits instead of critical thinking. In this, they almost resemble the roles Lenin and Luxemburg are forced to play in the dead Left's storytelling. This is not because Adorno and Marcuse played similar political roles, or had the same importance as Lenin and Luxemburg. Rather, for the dead Left, historical political content is turned into a projection screen for their own inner war, which is not the last, dire link in the historical chain of Marxist thought: indeed it's little more than a specific version of the all-encompassing one-dimensionality, which has to snuff out even the smallest spark of ambivalence.

The conflict between Adorno and Marcuse, which was mainly carried out in private correspondence, lasted for only about half a year, February to August 1969, and was ended by the sudden death of Adorno. Not two years before, Marcuse had advised his most prominent student, Angela Davis, to study philosophy with Adorno, Horkheimer, and Habermas in Germany, as Davis said in one of the best interviews that has ever been published in our newspaper, the *Platypus Review*.[17] In the same issue, we also published Davis's 1967 seminar paper "Introduction to negative dialectics."[18] Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* (1966) itself is saturated with the work and thought of Herbert Marcuse. *Negative Dialectics* should be read in tandem with *Reason and Revolution*, and should be understood as a critique of Heidegger and positivism. Adorno and Marcuse may have had issues with one another, but they were comrades, as far as this concept makes sense for people who were not party members. Both felt compelled to continue their shared project from the 1930s and early 40s. Without their shared understanding and critique of the Old Left, their differences on the New Left won't make any sense.

Both Adorno and Marcuse were aware of and did not brush aside the earnest critique they had earned from fellow travelers in the 1930s and 40s: critical theory, if it was to be taken seriously, always pointed to praxis as well. With the student movement, which was to transform the Left fundamentally, both theorists were aware that they carried responsibility for this movement and its ideas. Marcuse and Adorno had a conflict about how to take responsibility for their teachings and how the critical kernel of Marxism could be carried through the student movement — which they knew couldn't simply implement apparent solutions from another time — to make Marxism a living force again.

The event that started the correspondence was the occupation of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, which prompted Adorno to call the police. As one student of Adorno who was present back then told me, the occupiers claimed that they were going to "smash the *capitale fixe*,"[19] that is, steal typewriters. The same strongmen later attacked other students in the middle of taking tests by throwing tear-gas bombs into the classroom, and smashed the apartment of a student who was deemed insufficiently involved in radical action.[20] Adorno did not, like Habermas and Horkheimer, use the description of "Red fascists," but he saw elements of fascist political action becoming more dominant within the student movement. Marcuse on the other hand, had decided to call the U.S.-led world bloc "neo-fascism": Marcuse thought that thinking, acting, and feeling could not be free of this element. He therefore did not want to denounce the students publicly, even though he publicly spoke out against the same kind of actions as Adorno did. But Marcuse was not willing to concede one inch to the powers that be and its special bodies of armed men.

In their correspondence both reminded each other of their shared work, their shared Institute in the 30s. While Marcuse wrote that the new Frankfurt Institute was not the same anymore, he did not contradict Adorno, when the latter said, "our shared work lives on in Germany in my books, doesn't it?"

The more Marcuse experienced the sensationalist extravaganza of the European New Left, the more he understood what Adorno had meant, it seems. Both expressed the urgent need to meet and talk to each other about their differences and what they might learn from them.

This never happened. Not three weeks after Adorno's death, Marcuse stated in a television interview that the differences between Adorno and him had "well- and ill-meaningly" been distorted, disfigured.[21] Both were aware that the movement was struggling to develop adequate forms of organization. Marcuse said that the differences arose from their shared position and solidarity, both of which had not been diminished by the differences. Marcuse goes on to say that Adorno's radicalism and ruthless critique at no point had been compromised. In fact, that Adorno's verdict of students' actions as "pseudo-praxis" arose from his orthodox understanding of Marxism, Marcuse continued.

Neither Marcuse nor Adorno had thought that the other had given up Marxism: they were instead discussing what the events and tendencies meant for the long-standing problem of theory and praxis. Marcuse put it well when he said that their main difference was that Adorno didn't think the New Left was a force capable of influencing society, while Marcuse thought so. Marcuse said that this political conflict had died with Adorno, because no one else could hold Adorno's position.

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